IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A postage meter machine comprising:

a processing unit;

a data transmission device connected to said processing unit and ~~adapted~~ configured to transmit for transmitting information between said processing unit and a remote data center via a telecommunication network;

said data transmission device including a connection arrangement ~~for making~~ that makes a communication connection to a shared telecommunication line of said telecommunication network, said shared telecommunication line being shared by said data transmission device and a further telecommunication device;

a monitoring device connected to said processing unit ~~for monitoring~~ that monitors an occurring electrical signal in said shared communication line to identify a usage status of said shared telecommunication line~~,~~ ~~said usage status~~ indicating a currently occurring usage or a currently occurring attempt at usage of said shared telecommunication line by said further telecommunication device, and ~~for providing~~ that provides usage status information, dependent on said usage status, to said processing unit; and

said processing unit controlling a connection setup to said telecommunication network via said shared telecommunication line by said data transmission device dependent on said usage status information.

Claim 2 has been amended as follows:

2. (Previously Presented) A postage meter machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein said processing unit suppresses setup of said connection by said data transmission device if said usage status information indicates that said shared telecommunication line is in use by said further telecommunication device.

3. (Original) A postage meter machine as claimed in claim 2 wherein said usage status information includes a suppression signal generated by said monitoring device.

4. (Previously Presented) A postage meter machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein said monitoring device identifies an attempt at a connection setup via said shared telecommunication line by said further telecommunication device, and includes information identifying said attempt in said usage status information.

5. (Previously Presented) A postage meter machine as claimed in claim 4 wherein said monitoring device generates an interrupt signal in said usage status information upon identification of said attempt, and wherein said processing unit, upon receiving said interrupt signal, causes said data transmission device to interrupt use of said shared telecommunication line.

6. (Previously Presented) A postage meter machine as claimed in claim 5 wherein said interrupt signal is a first interrupt signal, and wherein said monitoring device, upon receiving a control signal from said processing unit to interrupt said use of said shared telecommunication line by said data transmission device, generates a second interrupt signal and transmits said second interrupt signal to said data center via said shared telecommunication line before interrupting said connection.

Claim 7 has been amended as follows:

7. (Currently Amended) A system for communicating between a data center and a postage meter machine, comprising:

a postage meter machine having a processing unit;

a data center located remote from said postage meter machine;

a data transmission device connected to said processing unit and ~~adapted for transmitting~~ configured to transmit information between said processing unit and said data center via a telecommunication network;

said data transmission device including a connection arrangement ~~for making~~ that makes a communication connection to a shared telecommunication line of said telecommunication network, said shared telecommunication line being shared by said data transmission device and a further telecommunication device;

a monitoring device connected to said processing unit ~~for monitoring~~ that monitors an occurring electrical signal in said shared communication line to identify a usage status of said shared telecommunication line, ~~said usage status~~ indicating a currently occurring usage or a currently occurring attempt at usage of said shared telecommunication line by said further telecommunication device, and ~~for providing~~ that provides usage status information, dependent on said usage status, to said processing unit; and

said processing unit controlling a connection setup to said telecommunication network via said shared telecommunication line by said data transmission device dependent on said usage status information.

8. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 7 wherein said monitoring device identifies an attempt at a connection setup via said shared telecommunication line by said further telecommunication device and includes a first interrupt signal in said usage status information supplied to said processing unit, and wherein said processing unit, upon receiving said first interrupt signal, supplies a control signal to said data transmission device instructing said data transmission device to interrupt said connection, and wherein said data transmission device, upon receipt of said control signal, generates a second interrupt signal and transmits said second interrupt signal to said data center via said shared telecommunication line before interrupting said connection.

Claim 9 has been amended as follows:

9. (Currently Amended) A method for controlling communication between a postage meter machine and a remote data center via a communication network having a shared telecommunication line shared by the postage meter machine and a further telecommunication device, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a postage meter machine with a processing unit and a data transmission device connected to said processing unit, and transmitting information between said processing unit and a remote data center via said telecommunication network;

including in said data transmission device a connection arrangement for making a communication connection to said shared telecommunication line of said telecommunication network, said shared communication line being shared by said data transmission device and a further telecommunication device;

with a monitoring device connected to said processing unit, monitoring a currently occurring electrical signal in said shared telecommunication line to identify a usage status of said shared telecommunication line[[,]] indicating a currently occurring usage or a currently occurring attempt at usage of said shared telecommunication line ~~being shared~~ by said ~~data transmission device and a~~ further telecommunication device[[;]], and providing usage status information, dependent in said usage status, to said processing unit; and

controlling, via said processing unit, a connection setup to said telecommunication network via said shared telecommunication line by said data transmission device dependent on said usage status information.

10. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 9 comprising via said processing unit, suppressing setup of said connection by said data transmission device if said usage status information indicates that said shared telecommunication line is in use by said further telecommunication device.

11. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 10 comprising including a suppression signal generated by said monitoring device in said usage status information.

12. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 9 comprising identifying, via said monitoring device, an attempt at a connection setup via said shared telecommunication line by said further telecommunication device, and including information identifying said attempt in said usage status information.

13. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 12 comprising including an interrupt signal in said usage status information upon identification of said attempt, and said processing unit, upon receiving said interrupt signal, causing said data transmission device to interrupt use of said shared telecommunication line.

14. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 13 wherein said interrupt signal is a first interrupt signal, and comprising generating a second interrupt signal in said monitoring device, upon receiving a control signal from said processing unit to interrupt said use of said telecommunication line by said data transmission device, and transmitting said second interrupt signal to said data center via said shared telecommunication line before interrupting said connection.